# Scientific Committee

# Minutes of the 102nd Plenary meeting

**Held on 17-18 February 2021**
**WEB - conference**

**(Agreed on 10 March 2021)**

## Participants

- Panel Members

  Simon More (chair), Diane Benford (vice chair), Susanne Hougaard Bennekou (vice chair), Vasileios Bampidis, Claude Bragard, Thorhallur Halldorsson, Antonio Hernandez-Jerez, Kostas Koutsoumanis, Kyriaki Machera, Hanspeter Naegeli, Søren Saxmose Nielsen (absent on 18 February from 9-15.30), Josef Schlatter, Dieter Schrenk, Dominique Turck, Henk Van Loveren (vice chair CEP Panel), Maged Younes.

- Hearing Experts[1]:

  Christer Hogstrand (for item 4.4)

  Ullrika Sahlin (for item 4.2)

- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

  Luis Vivas Alegre (DG SANTE Unit D1, Farm to Fork Strategy)

- EFSA:

  Executive Director: Bernhard Url (day 1)

  Executive Directorate Office: Stef Bronzwaer (for agenda item 6.3) and Marta Hugas

  Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department (RASA): Juliane Kleiner

  Scientific Evaluation of Regulated Products Department (REPRO): Guilhem De Seze

  Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department (COMCO): Barbara Gallani (for item 6.1)

[1] As defined in Article 15 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/expertselection.pdf

Scientific Committee and Emerging Risks Unit (SCER): Tobin Robinson, Daniela Maurici, Maria Chiara Astuto, Maria Bastaki, Bernard Bottex, Jean Lou Dorne, Georges Kass, Christina Kyrkou, Djien Liem, Agnes Rortais, Reinhilde Schoonjans, Rositsa Serafimova, Justyna Slodek-Wahlström, José Tarazona.

Transformation Services Unit (TS): Claudia Paoletti (for agenda item 6.2)

Assessment and Methodological support Unit (AMU): Olaf Mosbach-Schulz (for agenda item 4.2)

Feed Unit: Frank Verdonck, Montserrat Anguita Freixa (for agenda item 4.5)

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest of Scientific Committee/Scientific Panel/ Members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

## 4. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and/or possible adoption:

### 4.1 Draft statement on the derivation of Health Based Guidance Values (HBGVs) for regulated products that are also nutrients EFSA-Q-2019-00505

[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

The Scientific Committee was presented with the latest changes made to the Statement on the derivation of Health Based Guidance Values (HBGVs) for regulated products that are also nutrients.

This Statement covers situations when EFSA has to establish a HBGV for a regulated product that is also a nutrient. This process can lead to a complex situation in which two assessments requiring the establishment of HBGVs for the same substance (i.e. a nutrient) are carried out under different regulatory frameworks. This is a recurrent situation for food additives and pesticides and recent examples include the assessment of phosphates and chlorides as food additives, and copper as a pesticide. According to the Terms of Reference received from the SC, this Statement defines a general approach to be used in such situations, offering also harmonisation in terminology and providing recommendations for future assessments.

After the November Scientific Committee plenary meeting, the comments received by the Scientific Committee were discussed by the WG to adequately address some important points raised. The main amendments included the definitions of Upper Level (UL) and ADI, clarifications on the population to which the HBGV applies and on exposure, and further clarifications on Recommendation 5. Clarification was added regarding consultation and internal coordination between the NDA Panel and other EFSA Panels or Units. The need for timely coordination between relevant Panels was emphasised, of which the NDA will always be part of.

The Statement was presented for possible adoption, together with the Technical Report of the Public Consultation. After a short discussion on the future implications and possible follow-up, the document was unanimously adopted for publication.

### 4.2 Guidance on Expert Knowledge Elicitation (EKE)

An overview of the experience and feedback from the use of the EFSA Guidance on Expert Knowledge Elicitation in Food and Feed Safety Risk Assessment, published in 2014, was presented for discussion of possible update and/or revision. The Guidance defines the EKE process as "a systematic, documented, and reviewable process to retrieve expert judgements from a group of experts in the form of a probability distribution". The Guidance is structured to include specific points for review and formal methods designed to mitigate the impact of the psychological biases, take account of the available evidence, help experts reach well-founded judgements, and ensure an objective and transparent process.

After its adoption in 2014, trainings have been provided to teams from several EFSA units and to international agencies and the guidance has been implemented in several case studies in the fields of animal welfare, plant health, in the context of the revision of the Bee Guidance, and in one external case study by the WHO. Useful insights were obtained from the implementation of the EKE Guidance that can be adopted to improve future user experience. In addition, the 2018 SC Guidance on Uncertainty Analysis in Scientific Assessments, incorporated formal and semi-formal protocols of the EKE approach and was applied in a sequence of eight case studies among EFSA Panels. The WG on Uncertainty provided positive feedback on the EKE Guidance utility in uncertainty analysis as well as additions to be considered.

The practical use of the Guidance has allowed the identification of areas for possible improvement and revision, such as the need for a simplified procedure, a refinement of the use of EKE for identified context, more detailed guidance on the EKE process and implications, alignment with other GD, such as on uncertainty and weight of evidence, and an update according to the current state of the art. Three areas of updates were proposed, specifically incorporation of supervision practices and up-to date methodology to ensure high quality, application of best practices tools, such as a detailed technical manual, and the creation of a collaborative space for user feedback and exchange, with both virtual and physical fora. The latter would serve as a living resource for knowledge exchange, updates, and archives of EKE, to better support the timely relevance of the approach compared to the periodic revisions of a published guidance document.

The SC was asked to provide feedback on the proposal for an EKE Guidance revision. Panel chairs discussed their experience with using EKE in their WG activities, and differences in Panel needs for EKE use emerged. Fit-for purpose guidance, simplification of the process, and a shorter guidance to complement the present EKE Guidance were suggested. The SC will be provided with a questionnaire aimed to collect information and ideas from all Panels. Moreover, targeted training and dedicated meetings with the Panels will be organised.

### 4.3 Review of the health-based guidance value for copper and exposure from all sources. EFSA-Q-2020-00399

The Scientific Committee was presented with an update of the activities of the Working Group (WG) on Copper, which is working in response to a mandate by the EC to prepare a scientific opinion to revisit the derivation of the HBGV for copper, to resolve the different

HBGVs proposed for copper, and to perform a total exposure assessment from all sources.

The WG summarised the current status of the data available for Copper, and the critical values (NOAEL, Uncertainty Factors) and approaches that were used to derive the HBGVs (i.e. ULs, ADI) under different regulatory frameworks. The complexity of copper homeostasis, transport mechanisms and copper-related toxicity were also reviewed and will be considered during the assessment.

The strategic approach for responding to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the EC mandate was introduced.

Copper is an essential nutrient and is also used in regulated products area. Moreover, it is also naturally present in the environment. The strategy to address the ToRs aims at applying the principles and recommendations laid out in the EFSA Statement on the derivation of HGBV for regulated products that are also nutrients.

The strategy of the WG in addressing the first ToR includes 1) obtaining updated information on copper homeostasis, 2) exploring the role of hepatic retention in copper toxicity from chronic intake, and 3) obtaining updated information relevant to the range of other potential copper-related toxicities.

The strategy of the WG in addressing the second ToR is to perform an updated and refined exposure assessment. The oral exposure assessment will be based on total copper levels in food from all relevant sources and will identify the major contributing food categories. A sector-based refined exposure assessment will be performed for the main food categories, based on reported copper uses in commodities/crops, or food products. In addition to oral exposure, the WG aims to assess other sources of copper exposure, from reported uses of copper in consumer products, cosmetics and medical devices.

In accordance with the deadline of the mandate received, the Opinion is expected to be adopted by end of 2021. The WG will present a first draft of the scientific opinion to the Scientific Committee at the next SC Plenary in April 2021. A public consultation is expected during Summer 2021.

### 4.4 Updated draft guidance on scientific criteria for grouping chemicals into assessment groups for human risk assessment of combined exposure to multiple chemicals. EFSA-Q-2019-00517

The Chair of the Working Group (WG) presented the latest modifications of the draft guidance to SC members after comments received at the previous plenary as well as comments received during the ECHA targeted consultation. The SC members provided further comments on the updated version of the document, particularly for Chapter 4 and Annex C.

The next steps include a consultation of the Pesticide steering Network with a presentation of the draft guidance in March 2021. The revised version will be tabled at the next SC Plenary in April 2021 for endorsement for public consultation and launch for the period May-June 2021.

### 4.5 Draft requirements for whole genome sequence analysis of microorganisms intentionally used in the food chain. EFSA-Q-2019-00434

The EFSA Statement on the requirements for whole genome sequence analysis of microorganisms intentionally used in the food chain was endorsed by the Scientific Committee (SC) in December 2019 and subsequently published for public consultation until February 2020.

Whole Genome Sequence (WGS) is a recent and powerful tool for the identification and characterisation of microorganisms used as regulated products. Currently WGS-based data analysis is a requirement for the characterization of bacterial and yeast strains used in production of feed additives and food enzymes, while the NDA Panel Guidance offers the possibility to use the WGS to identify/characterize bacteria and yeasts. This Statement is intended as a reference and cross-cutting guidance for the risk assessment of intentionally added microorganisms in different regulated product areas. In particular, the document describes the presently available sequencing strategies, provides advice and recommendations to the applicant on how to perform and describe the analysis and results of WGS-based characterisation of microorganisms, and any quality criteria/threshold that should be provided/reached. These provisions represent the first step towards a harmonised approach in this type of assessment. Further refinement is expected to be built upon the experience obtained from its application and future updates will be needed to reflect developments in this fast-evolving area.

After the public consultation, the document has been integrated with additional text and this improved version was proposed for endorsement by the SC, prior to its final agreement by EFSA.

The SC endorsed the document and acknowledged its great value.

# 5. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/Scientific Panels, EFSA, the European Commission

## 5.1 Scientific Panel(s) including their Working Groups

### 5.1.1. Overview of the work programme of BIOHAZ and CONTAM Panels.

### Possible last-minute issues relevant for the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee (SC) was presented with an overview of work completed in 2020 and ongoing work carried out by the EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ), which is intended to provide scientific advice on biological hazards in relation to food safety and food-borne diseases.

In 2020 the BIOHAZ Panel has published nine scientific outputs on different subjects, including a scientific opinion on date marking, which proposes a decision tree aimed at discriminating between the date until when the food can be eaten safely (i.e. 'use by') or when the food retains its quality (i.e. 'best before'). In addition, the Panel has developed a database on microbial species notified to EFSA which is hosted within the Zenodo platform.

New mandates have been received and new scientific outputs are under development in the areas of food hygiene (e.g. on high-pressure processing, ageing of meat, use and reuse of water in the processing of fruits and vegetables, evaluation of the safety and efficacy of lactic acid to reduce microbial contamination on carcasses from wild game and small stock) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR; e.g. on specific maximum levels of cross-contamination for 24 antimicrobial active substances in non-target feed, and the role played by the environment in the emergence and spread of AMR through the food chain).

In its current activities, the Panel actively collaborates with other EFSA Panels and with the EFSA SC in matter of emerging risks on biological hazard. In particular, the BIOHAZ Panel is participating in the implementation of the Uncertainty analysis Guidance, with the purpose of implementing the approach proposed in all its assessments. A recent example of this implementation is reported in the Opinion "Evaluation of public and animal health risks in case of a delayed post-mortem inspection in ungulates". The Panel is also currently piloting the implementation of the Guidance on Protocol Development (link here) in two BIOHAZ mandates.

The SC was also presented with an overview of the ongoing and new mandates of the EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM), which is intended to provide scientific advice on contaminants in the food chain and undesirable substances such as natural toxins, mycotoxins, and residues of unauthorised substances.

Some of the ongoing activities of the CONTAM Panel have a cross-cutting nature or a link with the activities of the SC, requiring interaction with the SC cross-cutting Working Groups. Most of these mandates are relevant also to other EFSA Panels, have links to broader themes, e.g. bee health network, or are related to cross-cutting issues, such as mixtures, genotoxicity.

Lastly, the CONTAM Panel received training on the Uncertainty Analysis Guidance in November 2019. Following the training it was agreed to develop a tailored approach for the application of the guidance. A mapping of the most relevant and recurrent uncertainties in CONTAM assessments was prepared and the plan is now to develop, in cooperation with the SC WG on Uncertainty, an approach to prioritise and quantify uncertainties that will be applied by the CONTAM Panel WGs. The approach developed by CONTAM could be informative to other EFSA Panels dealing with chemical risk assessments.

### 5.1.2 Opinion from the Panel of Food Additives and Flavouring (FAF) on Titanium Dioxide (E 171)

The Scientific Committee was presented with an update on the ongoing safety assessment of the food additive titanium dioxide (E 171) by the Chair of the FAF Panel, in light of the wider attention the additive has received in Europe. The drafting of the Opinion on the safety of E 171 is in progress and it will be presented to the FAF Panel for possible adoption in March 2021. The FAF WG on E 171 has asked for the support of the SC cross- cutting (cc) WG on Nanotechnology and the ccWG on Genotoxicity. The ccWG on Nanotechnology has prepared an advice to the FAF Panel and its WG, elaborating on the nano considerations and adaptations related to specific aspects of study design with TiO2 which are adequate for a hazard characterisation of small particles, including nanoparticles in the context of the implementation of its draft "EFSA Guidance on Particle Technical Requirements for regulated food and feed product applications to establish the presence of small particles including nanoparticles".

The ccWG on Genotoxicity has been providing support on the genotoxicity evaluation of E 171. In addressing the large amount of

data to be reviewed under the mandate received, a pragmatic approach has been developed, borrowing certain elements from systematic review methodology for the screening and appraisal of relevance and reliability of the evidence.

After adoption of the opinion by the FAF panel, a discussion on lessons learnt will be held with the SC to reflect on how to improve the exchange between ccWGs and Panels and also to be prepared for possible future challenges.

## 5.2 Update on relevant WGs activities

### 5.2.1 Cross-cutting (cc) WG Genotoxicity

The ccWG on Genotoxicity is currently finalising the genotoxicity evaluation of titanium dioxide (E 171) in the context of the request for advice from the FAF Panel. The assessment of the ccWG will be submitted to FAF Panel for discussion during their next plenary meetings.

Involvement of the ccWG in the assessment of titanium dioxide (E 171) has delayed the finalisation of the Guidance on Aneugenicity assessment, the work on which is expected to be resumed soon. Due to increase of the requests for advice from ccWG received from the other EFSA Units/Panels and the expected high workload of the ccWG also for 2021, a call for expression of interest from external experts with an expertise in genotoxicity has been launched aiming at expanding the ccWG. Some reorganisation of the work of the ccWG might be also needed.

### 5.2.2 Cross-cutting WG Benchmark Dose (BMD)

According to the ToRs received, the main purpose of the review of the 2017 SC guidance on the use of the benchmark dose approach in risk assessment is to ensure harmonisation with the concepts for BMD analysis described in the Chapter 5 of WHO-IPCS Environmental Health Criteria 240. The update of the guidance and of the EFSA Platform for BMD analysis have been delayed because of a disagreement between EFSA and one of the contractors responsible for proposing a unified set of models to be fitted to the data, and for developing Bayesian model averaging as the preferred approach for BMD analysis. A new contract has been signed and the intention is to finalise the document in March

2022. The targeted consultation on the guidance initially planned for March 2021 is postponed to December 2021/January 2022, after the draft guidance has been presented at the November 2021 SC meeting.

The SC acknowledged EFSA's use of the BMD approach primarily to derive a reference point that will then be used to establish a health-based guidance value or calculate a Margin of Exposure. The Committee noted that exploring other BMD applications (e.g. potency comparison) may be of interest in the future.

### 5.2.3 WG Read across (RAx)

The WG on Read across (RAx) had a meeting in December 2020 where the technical content of a project to identify the applicability domain (in terms of toxicological endpoints and chemical space) for the use of RAx in food safety was discussed and agreed. This project aims to support development of the Guidance on RAx. The call for tenders will be launched soon. The first draft of the Guidance will be presented and discussed at the next meeting, scheduled for beginning of March.

### 5.2.4 WG Non Monotonic Dose Response (NMDR)

After endorsement at the last SC plenary meeting, the draft SC Opinion on the biological plausibility of NMDR and its impact on risk assessment in the remit of EFSA was published from 4 December 2020 to 4 February 2021 for public consultation. During this period the WG has received about 85 comments from 25 contributors, representative of numerous organisations worldwide.

The draft Opinion has received the interest from both the private and public sectors, indicating the relevance of this topic in regulatory risk assessment. Among the contributors to the consultation were International Liaison Group on Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food (ILMERAC) organisations, and a dedicated discussion is already scheduled at the next ILMERAC meeting.

The WG will start the screening of the comments soon. The current intention is to present the Opinion for adoption along with the technical report of the public consultation at the June SC plenary meeting. After assessing the comments, the WG will evaluate if these timelines require an update.

### 5.2.5 Cross-cutting WG Nanotechnologies

The ccWG on Nanotechnologies is currently finalising its two guidance documents under development: the updated version of the 2018 Guidance on risk assessment of the application of nanoscience and nanotechnologies in the food and feed chain: Part 1, human and animal health (Guidance on Nano-Risk Assessment); and the EFSA Guidance on Particle Technical Requirements for regulated food and feed product applications to establish the presence of small particles including nanoparticles (Guidance on Particle-Technical Requirements).

The Guidance on Particle-Technical Requirements has been published for public consultation and the ccWG is finalising the document based on the feedback received.
The Guidance on Nano-Risk assessment has been shared for a two-weeks consultation with the EFSA Nano Network of Member State representatives. The intention is to present both documents for possible adoption at the April or June SC plenary meeting.

The ccWG on Nanotechnologies is currently finalising its advice in the context of the EC mandate to the FIP Unit on the re-evaluation of titanium dioxide (E 171). The advice focusses on the relevance of individual toxicological studies for the hazard assessment of the fraction of small particles.

### 5.2.6 WG MUST-B

The SC was presented an overview of the presentation of the draft scientific opinion provided to the EP ENVI Committee last 25 January by Simon More and EFSA staff (SCER) with the support of Communications Department. The presentation was short, simple, clear and efficient. The meeting was chaired by the member of the Parliament (Group of the Greens) Bas Eickhout and questions raised were both on scientific and risk management issues. Klaus Berend concluded the meeting echoing the message conveyed by EFSA that the draft opinion is a prospectus for the future and the methods and tools outlined in it are also under development and cannot be applied to the current bee guidance review. The chair of the SC, Simon More, completed this overview by providing a list of lessons learnt: the implementation of an environmental risk assessment approach for honey bees that could be applied to wild bees and other organisms, the reposition of the opinion into a reflection document to support policy developments and all the key support and media training

provided over the last 1-2 years from various EFSA units to refine the message and science of this opinion for the ENVI Committee. Finally, the SC was recalled that the draft opinion is still under public consultation and that the deadline is extended by 1 week, until 4 March.

## 5.3 Feedback from EFSA

### 5.3.1 Presentation of the Botanicals Database

The SC was presented with the recent activities on the Compendium of Botanicals and a request for views on the strategy for characterising the toxicity of the naturally occurring substances of possible concern for human health.

Over the last five years, the activities of the EFSA WG on Compendium of Botanicals focused on transforming the initial Excel file into a web-accessible user-friendly database, increasing the number of plants in the Compendium to around 2600 species, and improving the quality of the information provided on composition and adverse effects of plant constituents by means of an extensive search of the literature for the plants considered. A user-friendly web-platform will soon be publicly available via the EFSA website.

The activities of the WG on Compendium of Botanicals are currently focused on the validation of the composition/toxicity information retrieved for around 900 plant species, and coding of the relevant information so that it is ready to be transferred to the EFSA database. Furthermore, the WG is developing a methodology to characterise the toxicity of the plant constituents identified as of possible concern for human health. The characterisation of the toxicity of substances of concern is focused on targeted toxicological endpoints, including acute toxicity, genotoxicity, carcinogenicity, developmental and reproductive toxicity, hepatotoxicity and nephrotoxicity. The approach identified for such characterisation is a step-wise approach using the available information within OpenFoodTox, an extensive literature search, and the use of QSAR models and read-across. The SC was asked to provide feedback and/or suggestions on the approach selected from the WG.

In order to guarantee the sustainability of the Compendium, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) will be considered in the future for the literature searches and data extraction. The AI models will be trained with the data that have already been retrieved for the database in literature searches conducted so far. The data extracted with the AI

approach will be verified by the experts before they are transferred to the EFSA Compendium.

### 5.3.2 Update on the International Liaison Group on Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food (ILMERAC)

The SC was updated on the past, current and future activities of the International Liaison Group on Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food (ILMERAC). ILMERAC is a network of 25 governmental and intergovernmental organisations working in the field of food safety around the world. According to the Terms of References adopted in April 2018, ILMERAC is aimed at supporting the development of new Risk Assessment methods for chemicals in food, while improving consistency and global harmonisation of the methods used for the risk assessment. Its main purpose is to ensure exchange of ongoing and planned activities, in order to promote international cooperation and engagement and to avoid duplication of efforts.

From its start in 2018, ILMERAC had eight teleconferences and one face-to-face meeting on topics of common interest. The network has been also used to share notifications on draft documents for public consultation (e.g. revised chapters of EHC 240, EFSA guidance documents).

In November 2020, the added value of ILMERAC was evaluated and the network members and observers were asked to provide feedback on this three-year collaboration and possible improvements through a structured online survey. The outcome of the survey showed that most valued past activities were the exchange on topics of common interest (e.g. chemical mixtures and New Approach Methodologies (NAMs)) and notifications on draft documents for public consultation.

At the EFSA level, ILMERAC is facilitating and fostering international harmonisation and better alignment of EFSA's risk assessment methodologies and approaches with International Standards (FAO, WHO, OECD) (EHC 240), creating opportunities for joining forces and sharing expertise in developing/implementing new approaches with risk assessment partners in and outside EU and as a result. The result is improving the confidence of consumers and stakeholders in EFSA's risk assessment methods, approaches and data. It was highlighted that this collaborative activity presents an important opportunity to harmonise methodologies between agencies.

## 6. Other scientific topics for information and/or discussion

### 6.1 Overview of EFSA's communication and engagement activities

The SC received an overview of the latest achievements, workplan and priority projects for 2021 of the EFSA Department on Communication, Engagement and Cooperation, which promotes and supports coordination and international engagement and partnerships via several tools. These include non-classical tools, such as social media, and classical communication tools, such as the EFSA Journal, which was recently integrated in PubMed with a high impact factor, becoming a reference for health professionals in the food science field.

In 2021, the EFSA Communications Department will dedicate efforts on informing the relevant stakeholders on the new changes and benefits brought by the Transparency Regulation that will become applicable as from 27 March 2021. The Transparency Regulation[4] will open new engagement windows during the risk assessment process and the development of scientific opinions. Several engagement methods are foreseen to improve engagement and will require the involvement of EFSA's scientific staff.

The EFSA Communications activities in 2021 will focus on selected scientific topics (e.g. in matter of bee health, sustainable and healthy food, chemicals in food, and animal health and welfare).

As a follow-up of the 2019 EFSA Scientific Opinion on the risk assessment of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the south-eastern countries of Europe, during 2020, EFSA carried out a communication campaign aimed at the early detection, timely reporting of cases and the prevention of the spread of ASF in South-East Europe by increasing awareness and engaging key audiences. Based on the results of the campaign and post-campaign research, a follow-up Campaign 2021 is planned.

Informed by the EU barometer 2019, another campaign is scheduled on 'Make food choices with confidence'. The campaign is set to raise awareness on the science behind the EU food safety system, encouraging EU citizens to think critically about their everyday choices. It will support the "Farm to Fork" strategy and part of the campaign will invite user generated content.

[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019R1381

The SC received an update on the EC mandate on Technical Assistance on Risk Communication, which will delivers three reports: (1) one on technical assistance in the field of risk communication; (2) one on Communication Products Review and best practices for Dissemination processes and (3) one on Mapping of Risk Communication mechanisms at National, EU and International level. These are planned to be ready by the end of March 2021.

An editorial on Future directions for risk communication at EFSA[5] has recently been published in the EFSA Journal. This is a reflection paper that focuses on an audience-driven approach, new communication technologies and systems, and ways to achieve more effective communications to the general public and to expert audiences.

The SC acknowledged the excellent work done by EFSA in the field of communications and future challenges and opportunities for trusted and effective communications were discussed. The Scientific Committee also asked to receive more information on the progress of the EFSA Journal in one of the next plenary meetings.

### 6.2 Update on the implementation of the Transparency Regulation

The Transparency Regulation (EC 2019/1381) will enter into force from 27 March 2021. The aim of the new Regulation is to increase the transparency of risk assessment in the food chain, strengthen the reliability, objectivity and independence of the scientific studies submitted to EFSA and reinforce the governance of EFSA to ensure the Authority's long-term sustainability. It was developed in response to a European Citizens' Initiative on pesticides and the findings of the review of the General Food Law Regulation that was completed in January 2018. The transition cycle will be completed in July 2022, with the establishment of the new management board.

As part of the implementation process, EFSA has published detailed practical arrangements (PAs - link here) for how the new rules and measures specified in the regulation will operate in practice. The practical arrangements are aimed primarily at EFSA's stakeholders, such as applicants who want to place food products on the EU market. They were drafted following extensive consultation with stakeholders, the European Commission and EU Member States throughout 2020.

[5] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/e190201

The PAs cover areas such as proactive transparency, confidentiality, notification of studies, pre-submission advice and consultation of third parties. EFSA has also published PAs on the processing of applications for access to documents held by EFSA.

The transition will be reflected in the update of 27 administrative EFSA Guidance documents, which will inform the relevant stakeholders on the new administrative and scientific procedures.

New tools have been adopted to facilitate the activities expected under the Transparency Regulation, including document management, workflow, information dissemination and communication with stakeholders. Among these, a new dissemination portal, OpenEFSA, has been introduced. It will be the window through which the risk assessment can be monitored from receipt to adoption by all stakeholders.

Lastly, 2021 is considered an interim year during which adaptations to the organisational changes begin to take place, by absorbing additional tasks and new staff within the existing structure. A comprehensive training framework will be provided to EFSA staff and experts. The next steps on risk communication, sustainability and changes in EFSA governance are based on an ecosystem concept built on partnerships with Article 36 organisations.

### 6.3 EFSA's research involvement

The Scientific Committee was presented with the latest development on the EFSA's research involvement.

In 2018 EFSA organised the Risk Assessment Research Assembly (RARA), which was aimed at stimulating new partnership in food safety research to safeguard public health and highlighting the importance of public funding. The next RARA meeting will be held in December 2021. Since the RARA 2018, follow-up activities started and the EFSA's Research Platform (link here) was developed. This platform is home for the wider food safety research community and aims to support project ideas, and help scientists find opportunities for public research funding in food safety and stay updated with on-going projects in several areas.

The Scientific Committee was presented with ongoing projects in which EFSA is involved such as the Foodsafety4EU (https://foodsafety4.eu/) and PARC, a European Partnership to support EU and national chemical

risk assessment and risk management bodies with new knowledge, methodologies and networks.

Current EFSA policy precludes formal scientific support at the stage of submitting a proposal for research funding, but EFSA can engage in external research projects, relevant to the EFSA risk assessment thought other mechanisms. EFSA keeps a register of its involvement in external research projects. This will be made accessible on the EFSA Research Community microsite that has been revamped and will be soon be made accessible also to all EFSA Panel members.

The SC was asked to provide feedback on interest in the platform and future involvement in research projects. The SC welcomed EFSA's involvement in research projects and the discussion highlighted the importance of input during the initial design phase of a project to effectively support the risk assessment needs.

## 7. Any other business

### 7.1 In Memory of Prof. Vittorio Silano

The chair invited the EFSA Executive Director, Bernard Url, to speak in memory of Professor Vittorio Silano, long standing member of the Scientific Committee, who passed away on the 22nd of December 2020, at the age of 80. The Executive Director noted that Prof. Silano had worked with EFSA from the start, for 17 years and he had been supporting EU food safety for much longer. Prof. Silano served as the vice chair of the Scientific Steering Committee of DG SANCO. He was the first Chair of EFSA's Scientific Committee in 2003 and served as such until 2012 when he became a member of the CONTAM Panel. From 2014 he served as chair on the CEF/CEP Panel.

Professor Silano was remembered for his vast experience through his work as a risk assessor in scientific committees at national, EU and international level, through his work for the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, WHO's European Centre for Environment and Health and his leading position as Director of one of the three Departments in the Italian Ministry of Health, dealing with Research and Innovation, under many different Cabinets.

Professor Silano dedicated all his life to the provision of the best possible scientific advice at the European and international levels and he will be remembered for his clear vision of the scientific directions for constructively exchanging views with his colleagues in the SC. He will be missed as an ardent supporter and representative of EFSA and most of all as a dear and beloved colleague.

### 7.2 Draft agenda next SC Plenary

The SC was presented with an overview of the topics that will be on the agenda of the next meeting scheduled for the 14-15 April 2021.

### 7.3 Collection of expression of interest for Panel chairs and vice chairs to sit in another Panel as observer and to participate to other WGs as observers

Panel Chairs and vice chairs were invited to notify the Scientific Committee secretariat of their interest in participating as observers in other Panel meetings. This exchange is envisioned as a mechanism of information sharing among Panels about ongoing activities and ideas for optimal implementation of recommendations of past opinions and coordination on cross-cutting topics.

### 7.4 General matters arising

The Scientific Committee was provided with a document summarising relevant activities that took place since the last plenary meeting with focus on the activities of the EFSA Management Board, Advisory Forum (AF), interagency and international scientific cooperation and EFSA Stakeholders Meetings.

### 7.5 List of published opinions since November 2020

The Scientific Committee was provided with a document containing the list of published opinions from 1 November 2020 to 18 January 2021 produced by the different Panels and Units, including those on applications for food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings, GMOs, health claims, feed additives, novel foods and food additives. The list also provides a list of published conclusions on pesticides and ongoing public consultations.

**End of the meeting**